

HOW OLD ARE YOU?

Never in the history of this country has this question been of such vital interest to so many people as it is to-day, June 5, 1917.

Never before has the United States Government been so deeply interested in knowing the exact ages of the young men of the land. What never before has the public mind been so ready to grasp the great importance of complete birth registration.

In ordinary times, as the years go by and problem after problem is taken up and settled our civilization grows; and the more rapidly these problems are taken up and settled the more rapidly this civilization grows.

In ordinary times the normal demands upon our attention first by one problem and then by another easily explains the temporary sidetracking in so many states of the problem of COMPLETE BIRTH REGISTRATION. It is not because the people believe birth registration unimportant, but the problem has simply been crowded to one side until a more favorable day.

When the story is told of the American arrested in London as a German spy, unable to obtain a birth certificate because his birth had never been recorded and because the doctor had died, but finally saved by the discovery of an old letter which told of his birth, the people grasp the point and agree that births should be registered; but as the story relates to somebody far away, somebody unknown, and probably never heard of before, the point is soon forgotten and no wave of strong public opinion is ever really started. So too the statements that birth records are needed to prove men of voting age, to establish old age pensions and pensions for the children of soldiers, to establish rights of inheritance, to determine how efficiently the states are protecting the health of the children, and to determine who is entitled to the protection of OUR FLAG—these statements are too apt to be treated as old axioms which call for no immediate reform.

The need for complete birth registration is recognized but the inertia of the people still prevails.

Thus in ordinary times the problems of civilization are settled slowly, but not so in time of war or after great catastrophes. Then the emergency or bitter experience brings quick results.

The city devastated by fire is so rebuilt as to guard against a second conflagration.

The terrible loss of life which follows overloading an excursion steamer results in more stringent laws and in greater safety for future travelers.

And to-day—this WAR CALL for the registration of our young men brings home the need of birth records to every community and to almost every family in the United States.

HOW OLD ARE YOU?

Can you prove that you are under 21 or over 31, or must you forever be suspected of having falsified your age?

Perhaps a fond mother to save her son from the horrors of the trenches may swear he is below the age limit; perhaps years later proof will be found that this man should have registered; imagine his chagrin at not having done his part in the WAR.

Perhaps there are slackers who in the absence of birth records may be able to shirk registration.

Surely on this day the need of complete birth registration is evident to all.

May we not hope that this call for the registration of all men between the ages of 21 and 31 will awaken the people from their lethargy and lead at once to this forward step in our civilization—the REGISTRATION OF EVERY BIRTH.

If you are interested and wish to know how to obtain better birth registration in your state write to the United States Census Bureau.

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Health Department

City of Oakland, California

F. F. JACKSON, M. D.

Commissioner of Public Health and Safety

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Health Department

KIRBY B. SMITH, M. D. Health Officer

JOHN H. MELLON, Secretary

STAFF:

A. M. THOMPSON, Market and Food Inspector

C. C. WING, D. V. S., Veterinarian

J. H. EUSTICE, Plumbing and Sanitary Inspector

P. P. MUSSER, M. D., Bacteriologist

JESSIE V. BERRY, A. B., Chemist

LOUISE SCHMITS, R. N., Head Nurse

